

The Case for CLIL (Transcript of Podcast)

El caso a favor de CLIL (Transcripción de Podcast)

Susan Hillyard

Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE)
(Norwich, UK)

Abstract

In this podcast, Susan Hillyard provides a personal reflection on what CLIL means to her as well as the main influences she considers important in the development of CLIL over the years. Key to this understanding of CLIL is also the changing role of English and the fact that the content and language are becoming inextricably linked in the changing educational landscape of the 21st century.

Key Words: CLIL; ELT; motivation; *LACLIL*.

Resumen

En este podcast, Susan Hillyard nos da una reflexión personal sobre el significativo de CLIL para ella mismo, y, a la vez, considera quienes son las influencias principales en el desarrollo de CLIL a través de los años. Una de las claves para el entendimiento sobre CLIL es el cambiante papel del inglés y el hecho que ya hay un enlace inextricable entre contenido y lenguaje en el cambiante entorno educativo en el Siglo 21.

Palabras Claves: CLIL; ELT; motivación; *LACLIL*.

ACCESS TO PODCAST

- **Link to online audio of podcast:**
<http://laclil.unisabana.edu.co/index.php/LACLIL/article/view/2603/2847>

TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

Hello. This is Susan Hillyard. I'm the latest addition to the Editorial board of the online journal *LACLIL* in the position of Executive Editor for Development. I'd like to outline my work in CLIL and present a little on my vision for the ongoing development of the journal.

I'm very excited to be invited and thank you for letting me be part of developing bilingualism in Latin America.

Even as long ago as 1975 when the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life*, was published in England, I was interested in the connection between content and language. What Bullock said, in a nutshell, was that all content teachers had to be language teachers and, as a corollary, I myself added that all language teachers had to be content teachers. I quote from the principal recommendations:

4 Each school should have an organised policy for language across the curriculum, establishing every teacher's involvement in language and reading development throughout the years of schooling. (137-139; 190; 89; 171)

Of course, it was not called CLIL in those days. It was a matter of raising the level of language development in first language English speakers, and as I was teaching English Language, English literature, maths and geography in the then remedial department of a huge comprehensive school in downtown Coventry, I found myself very interested.

As I went on to live and work in four more countries—Singapore, teaching teenagers in a trilingual school; Saudi Arabia as curriculum co-ordinator in a girls' bilingual Muslim School; Spain, as Head of department in an International School; and then, here, in Argentina as Head of Secondary in three bilingual schools; Director of a teachers' Centre, which served the Professional Development needs of 100 bilingual schools; as Professor in two training colleges in Buenos Aires city and finally as an Associate trainer at NILE in the UK—I began to see how language could not be divided from content and *vice versa*.

As you can imagine, this was a process which occurred over a long period of time and took root in my professional being in many different ways and through many different levels, types of content, and through a variety of methodologies.

In moving from country to country, I adapted to many new cultures, customs, and contents, realising that content is the stuff our languages are made of, whatever the language. We don't talk about nothing ... well ... most of us don't! We always have content. Whether it be fact or fiction, whether it be true or untrue, whether it be the stuff sweet dreams or nightmares are made of, it's always got some meat, and I realised that lots of English language lessons lacked the staple food that learners, especially young learners require. They need a *hook*, they need a hanger to hang the language on. They are not interested in grammar, in accuracy, in theory; they want to *use* the language, to play with ideas through the language, to engage in the human condition, in true communication in an exploration of their own curiosity and of their own opinions.

It became more and more clear to me that we are all the same, while we are all different, but certain universals remain. Language and thought feed each other and they do that through content material. Thus, it was that I got interested in the arts; mainly drama, music and literature as materials for exploiting the language. I saw the importance of practical ways into teaching the language and encouraging the use of the imagination, creativity, manipulation, hands on activities, project work, first hand experiences and task based learning.

Part B

I had always admired the writings of John Dewey, Montessori, Ivan Illich, Dorothy Heathcote, the philosophy of the whole language movement, which I am actually a product of, and the newer writings of Howard Gardner and his multiple intelligences, Jim Cummins with his bilingual immersion programmes, Robert Fisher and his model of language learning, Peter Jarvis, to mention just a few. I became interested in thinking skills and how the language and thinking skills could work together to help students to have a more enjoyable time in learning the language and to be more challenged.

I began to put together my own ideas which I called *The Real Issue* and to formulate a more palatable way of teaching and learning the English language—or, again, any language for that matter—which had to cover the arts, practical subjects and the academic curriculum of traditional materials all rolled into one. Communication had to be at its heart, including

comprehensible input on the part of the teacher and, even more importantly, comprehensible and intelligible informed *output* on the part of the learner. I realised that the 32 cultures we had in the International school in Spain needed to understand not just their own cultures but the cultures of the host country plus the cultures, customs, and contents of all the others. What a tall order!

As I became more excited about touring the world of ELT in reality, virtually, on the web, and through reading, I began to see that there had to be changes in order to accommodate the changing world. The whole world order was changing before my very eyes, and we had to come together somehow, somewhere, sometime. And it seems to me now, from my musings and from my experiences, that CLIL may be one way. It is certainly very, very motivating for students of the English language.

According to Graddol (2006, p. 118) as “global English makes the transition from ‘foreign language’ to basic skill,” a new world English language project will take shape and CLIL may well be part of that trend. He sees global English as an innovation (p. 106) which follows innovation diffusion theory and which will be taken up in different ways, through different means, at different rates and with different measures of success. He cites CLIL as “a significant curriculum trend in Europe” (p. 86) and admits that similar approaches are now used under different names in many countries. I am pleased to be part of this world trend and to have been invited by the editorial board of *LACLIL* to develop the reach and scope of this innovative on-line journal.

We all know that the concept of CLIL is not new, but the label is indeed new, having been coined by David Marsh from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland in 1994; and once something has a label then it takes on new dimensions. The label allows the concept to be discussed in a variety of contexts. Each of the contexts can wonder how the basic idea can be adapted, if indeed at all, to a new and different context from the one in which it was born. What’s most interesting is that the spread and shift of the English language throughout the globalised world at such an exponential rate has prompted stakeholders to question, analyse, compare, contrast, and discuss just where we are heading and what the acronym CLIL actually means.

I hope I will be able to develop the journal. I hope you will help me. I’m interested in teachers, researchers, investigators ... any of the stakeholders in developing bilingualism in the world to contribute to this first Latin American journal on CLIL. I hope you will send articles, podcasts, reviews, reflections, and links to quality sites and anything which you think can help to produce a quality journal for Latin America and the rest of the world. We are concerned that quality should override quantity, but we want to hear many voices and create a multimedia, interactive journal for the 21st century teacher and researcher.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for being a part of this new, online community. This is Susan Hillyard signing off. Goodbye!

REFERENCES

- Bullock, A. (1975). *A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Enquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Retrieved 22 September 2009 from <http://www.dg.dial.pipex.com/documents/docs1/bullock.shtml>
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next*. London: British Council.

BIODATA

Susan Hillyard is a teacher, teacher-trainer, course designer, and author in the field of CLIL. She began her career with a B.Ed. from Warwick University (U.K.), and since then has worked in fifteen countries. She currently works as a NILE Associate Trainer, training European teachers on intensive courses on methodology among other projects. She has taught Prof. Language IV at two major ITT colleges in Buenos Aires and on-line courses on *Creativity*, *TKT* and on *English in the World*, MA TESOL at the New School Uni, New York. She served as a former Educational Advisor for The Performers Theatre. Her numerous publications include (as a co-author) the resource book for teachers, *Global Issues* (Oxford University Press) and (as an author) *Language and Globalisation* (Master in ELT, La Sabana University, Bogota, Colombia). She was a member of the writing team for the on-line module for *Inglés, Inglês, English: ESP for South American Teachers* for the British Council, designed the Hong Kong, British Council *Summer School Courses for Teens*, and co-authored the *TDI-TKT on-line course* for Pearson, New York.